

that that dog didn't bite you; he is not my dog; he kicked you first. Their first response was that critical race theory is a figment of your imagination. And they said it is not taught in Virginia. And they said: Well, it should be taught anyway because our schools and our institutions are so racist.

Then again, they also said that there was no threat of having teenage boys in girls' bathrooms. We now know that Loudoun County didn't just cover up one rape—one rape—of a teenage girl by a boy dressed as a girl but then transferred that boy to another school, where he committed a second assault. Not surprisingly, parents in Loudoun County didn't take too kindly to the woke Democrats in charge of that school system.

When their arguments failed to persuade, the Democrats tried a different tactic: silencing parents. Terry McAuliffe boldly claimed that parents shouldn't tell schools what they should teach their kids. Attorney General Merrick Garland even tried to sic the FBI on parents who showed up to protest at school board meetings.

So it is no wonder that parents voted for Republicans in Virginia and across the country when the alternative was nothing but contempt and spite for parents raising their children as they see fit.

So, yes, the American people are disappointed, dissatisfied, and, frankly, disgusted with the modern Democratic Party, which sneeringly claims that it knows best always and about everything. Now, if it did, it would have seen this coming.

I would simply caution my Democratic colleagues, especially four future former one-term Senators, that if they don't change their ways, if they proceed with this reckless tax-and-spending bill, which includes over a trillion dollars in wasteful spending and which is littered with woke projects and leftist schemes, next year will be even worse. That chill you feel is the voters walking over your grave.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING ABNER LINWOOD HOLTON, JR.,
AND VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to offer a tribute to one of my best friends and my political hero, my father-in-law, Linwood Holton, who died last Thursday at age 98.

I wanted to talk about Linwood and his influence on my life, but there is no more appropriate time to talk about him than right now, as we are about to cast a vote to proceed to the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

Abner Linwood Holton, Jr., was born September 21, 1923, in Big Stone Gap,

VA. Big Stone Gap is a tiny town in the far southwest corner of Virginia, a few miles from the Virginia-Kentucky border.

He was the son of a dad who helped run a small railroad—the Interstate Railroad—that would bring coal out of the coalfields to connect with a larger rail line that ran north and south through the Great Valley of Virginia.

Growing up at that time, with three siblings, with parents who cared deeply about him, he saw the challenges of the Depression. And my father-in-law was a very remarkable youngster because he had a deep empathy for other people that sometimes young folks don't always have.

My father-in-law wrote an autobiography called "Opportunity Time" in the early 2000s, and he described an experience in his life that was pivotal to the rest of his life. He was young, 8 or 9 years old. He lived in a community that was predominantly White folks. There were few African Americans in his town. It was a community that was connected to coal mines in Appalachia. He saw a friend of his talking to an elderly African-American man in an incredibly mean and disrespectful way, and it shocked him.

So he asked the man, after his friend had gone: Why did you let him talk to you that way? I can't believe that a youngster would talk to an adult that way.

And the man basically just pointed to the color of his skin and said: What choice do I have? That is just the way we get treated.

When Linwood wrote his autobiography—I can almost quote this directly from memory—he described that instance, and he said: It caused me to feel such shame then, and I feel shame as I write these words today.

Sometimes young people watch how others treat people, and they just absorb, OK, I guess that is the way you treat people. But Linwood, as a youngster, immediately could grasp, no, that is not the way to treat people.

I think he connected the discrimination against this African-American man with a discrimination that he kind of felt being from Appalachia. There were stereotypes about Appalachians—hillbillies or whatever else they might be called—and he resented that. He didn't like anybody looking down on him, and he decided that the answer to that was not for him to look down on others, but that, instead, anybody looking down on anybody else was doing wrong. I think this was also partly out of Lin's deep religious faith. He was raised in a Presbyterian church, in Big Stone GA, VA.

My father-in-law went on to go to Washington and Lee. Pearl Harbor happened. His parents wrote him and said: We know what you are going to try to do. You are going to try to drop out of college to go fight World War II. Please don't do it.

He promised his parents he would get through the end of the academic year,

and did. And then he dropped out, and he joined the Navy.

I said to my father-in-law once: You were in Big Stone Gap. You had never even seen the ocean before. Why would you join the Navy and not the Army?

He said: In the Navy, you always get a bunk, and I hate sleeping on the ground.

So he joined the Navy. He was in the submarine corps in the Pacific during World War II. He participated in the occupation of postwar Japan. Then came back to Virginia, settled in Roanoke; met my mother-in-law, Jinx, who turned 96 10 days ago; had four children, including my wife, Anne—Anne was the second of their four children—10 grandchildren.

But after practicing law in Roanoke, he made a decision that he didn't like politics in Virginia and he was going to try to do something really important, which was create a competitive two-party system.

Virginia was dominated by a political machine called the Byrd Machine from the 1920s until the 1960s. So there wasn't really two-party politics. And the Byrd Machine was a machine in a particular way—sometimes if we think about machines, we might think about corruption and bribery. That was not what the machine did. The Byrd Machine was corrupt in maybe even a more damaging way. It dramatically limited who could vote, who could participate; drove down turnout in elections through mechanisms, like poll taxes and literacy tests and other things so that very few folks could even participate in the democracy in Virginia—the mother of Presidents.

Linwood came back from the Pacific in World War II. There was a Governor's race in 1945, in Virginia, and a gentleman by the name of Bill Tuck, from Halifax County, won that race. And Linwood has told me this a million times: I came back and Bill Tuck won the Governor's race, and the total turnout in the race was about 8 percent of Virginia adults—8 percent.

Poll taxes kept people away. Literacy tests kept people away. The absence of a meaningful two-party system made some folks say: Why bother?

And Linwood said: I fought in the Pacific for democracy, and I come home to the Commonwealth of Virginia and this is what I'm faced with.

And so he took it upon himself to build a Republican Party so that there could be a competitive two-party democracy in Virginia that would give people a choice and that would break down barriers of all kinds to people being educated together, people working together, and people being able to vote and participate.

My father-in-law is most known because he was the Governor that integrated the public schools of Virginia after previous Governors had kept them segregated, even 16 years after Brown v. Board of Education.

The Byrd Machine had insisted that Governors fight against the Federal

Government, fight against bussing, fight against the notion that children could sit in a classroom next to somebody whose skin color was different.

In Virginia, during my lifetime, a number of jurisdictions even shut their public schools down for years, years at a time—in one instance, for 5 years—rather than let students go to schools together where they might sit with somebody of a different race. Prince Edward County and other counties shut schools down—Warren County in Northern Virginia, Norfolk.

Linwood wanted to break that up. That passion for racial equality from his early days led him to want to break that up because we are all equal, but also, education is so important; why deprive anyone of an educational opportunity? So he campaigned first twice for the House of Delegates in Roanoke and lost both times. Then he was the Virginia candidate for Governor, the Republican candidate, in 1965. He got 35 percent of the vote, which was unheard of for a Republican. Then he ran again in 1969, and he won the governorship on his fourth try for elected office.

Shortly after his election, a Federal court in Richmond ordered that schools be bussed to achieve the ending of segregation and have students be able to learn together regardless of the color of their skin.

Linwood did what was unthinkable in 1970. Instead of fighting against bussing and fighting against integration, he not only said “I am going to support this,” but he said “I am going to support it with my own school-age children.”

My wife and her siblings lived in the Governor's mansion, and it wasn't in any particular school district. They could have gone to all-White schools in the suburbs. They could have gone to private schools. But, instead, the Governor and his wife, my mother-in-law, and the four kids decided, we are going to go to the neighborhood schools. And those neighborhood schools were primarily African-American schools.

Linwood escorted my sister-in-law, Tayloe, into John F. Kennedy High School, a predominantly African-American high school in Richmond, in the fall of 1970. The picture of the Governor and Tayloe walking into that predominantly Black school was on the front page of the New York Times. There had been so many pictures of Governors in the South standing in schoolhouse doors blocking African-American kids from coming into high schools and colleges, but there was only one picture—only one—of a southern Governor escorting his daughter into a primarily Black high school to send the message that we are all equal; that education is important and the era of defiance in fighting against the Supreme Court is over.

Linwood also brought African Americans into State employment in leadership roles in very significant ways that had not been done before.

As people think about Governor Holton, they think about him as a pioneer who helped turn Virginia away from defiance and segregation to try to realize the original promise of equality that another Virginian, Thomas Jefferson, articulated in the Declaration of Independence. He did other things as well. He created the modern cabinet system in Virginia. He unified the Port of Virginia. These ports in Newport News, Portsmouth, and Norfolk that were kind of competing with each other—he brought them all together so they could compete with ports around the world rather than with each other. He imposed an income tax to clean up Virginia's rivers.

But his true legacy and what people think about him is, he was a champion for racial equality at a time when leaders were needed. And it was hard. It was hard. Linwood had spent now 20 years building up a competitive two-party democracy in Virginia, and he left office with a 77-percent approval rating when he was about 47 years old. But his party would have nothing to do with him. They were so upset with this founder of the Virginia modern Republican Party; they were so upset with him for integrating public schools that when he ran for the U.S. Senate just a few years later, in 1978—he had been out of office 3 years—in a four-way Republican-nominated convention, he finished third out of four because his pro-racial equality stand was so controversial. As you might imagine, that made my father-in-law a little bitter. He had worked so hard to build up a two-party system and to champion racial equality that that was hard for him.

I met my wife and started to date her shortly after he had unsuccessfully run for the Senate. I come from a completely nonpolitical family from Kansas City. I knew nothing about politics, nothing about Virginia. Then I got to know this kind of scary, you know, potential father-in-law who was notable and had been a Governor, and he seemed kind of intimidating to me. But as I got to know his story, I could see how proud he was of his accomplishments and of his children but how painful it was to have advanced in steps of courage toward something good and then be frozen out, basically, of politics thereafter.

Yet, through the miracle of longevity, people came around. They came around to appreciate him. Beginning in about the 1990s, people started to say: Linwood Holton—that was a good Governor. He lived long enough to see his reputation be restored and people understanding his pivotal role in helping Virginia move forward.

The obituaries and tribute to Governor Holton when he passed last Thursday at noon, peacefully—and my wife was there to tell her mother that her husband of 68 years had just passed—the tributes that have come in have been remarkable, and the family kind of laughed about the things that they are saying about Lin Holton. They

are 180 degrees different than the things they were saying about him in the 1970s.

Pages, living well is the best revenge. Live according to your vows and stick by it. You know what. It will come back to you one day, and people will respect you for being a person of principle. That is how it was with Lin.

I am on the floor today—I was intending to come today regardless of what the vote was because I wanted to kind of collect my thoughts about my father-in-law. There are so many things he stands for: the value of equality; that losing isn't bad. He ran for office five times in his life, and he only won once. His record is 1 in 4. But nobody ever says about Lin Holton that he lost four elections. What they said is that he was Governor at a tough time and that he had courage and a backbone, and he did what was right. He was also a great voting rights Governor.

Here is where I want to conclude and then lead into the vote that we will cast on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

Remember I told you how when Linwood came back from World War II, there was a Governor's race, and the turnout was just so pitifully low because of things like poll taxes that were designed not only to disenfranchise African-American voters but poor White voters too. If you didn't pay your poll tax, it would accumulate year to year, and then you would go to vote, and you would be presented with a big bill. If you couldn't pay it, you couldn't vote. That is what kept voting percentages so low in Virginia.

Poll taxes were commonly used this way in the South, all over the South. Many States had abandoned poll taxes by the 1940s and 1950s because they disenfranchised not only African-Americans but also poor Whites. But Virginia still had a poll tax. That was one of the main reasons why turnout was so low in the election of 1945, and it became an object in the platform of the Republican Party that my father-in-law built to get rid of poll taxes. They tried and they tried, but they were outmatched in the Virginia Legislature, and the Byrd Machine wanted poll taxes.

This body, Congress, got rid of poll taxes as a prerequisite to voting in Federal elections in the 24th Amendment to the Constitution. It was passed and then ratified by the States in 1964, but poll taxes were still used in State elections in Virginia.

Get this: When Lin ran for Governor in 1965 and lost, the total votes cast were about 565,000 votes. When he ran for Governor in 1969 and won—with the support of business and labor and the civil rights organization—now the total vote was 965,000. In one cycle between two Governor's races, the turnout went up by 65 percent in one cycle, and it went up for one reason: In *Harper v. Virginia* in 1966, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down poll taxes for State elections.

So when you cleared that obstacle out of the way, participation dramatically improved. Even though a Republican won, my father-in-law, it was great for democracy—small “d” in democracy—because more participation is a positive thing.

Last night, we had a Governor’s race in Virginia, and it didn’t end up the way I hoped that it would, but there was a good thing for democracy in that election. The turnout in last night’s election in Virginia was 25 percent higher than in the Governor’s race 4 years earlier. That is a huge, huge increase in voter participation. Why was the turnout so much higher? It was higher because our Virginia Legislature made a series of reforms to take Virginia from one of the hardest States to vote in in the country—couldn’t vote easily early; couldn’t vote in person early; had to have an excuse to cast an absentee ballot. In 2019, our two Democratic houses passed legislation that now makes Virginia one of the easiest States to vote in in the country. As a result, the turnout went up by 25 percent from the last Governor’s race to the race last night.

Again, it wasn’t the outcome that I wanted, but creating more opportunities for voting rights just wasn’t to help the Democratic Party; it was actually to help small “d” democracy in the same way my father-in-law battled against poll taxes. When they were knocked down, there were more people willing to participate. The reforms we made in Virginia have enabled both Democrats and Republicans and Independents to participate more conveniently and thus have driven up voting turnout.

I am a strong supporter of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, restoring meaningful preclearance, and requiring jurisdictions that have a pattern of voting rights violations to seek preclearance. One of the reason I so strongly support it is I lived under the Voting Rights Act as the mayor of Richmond, and I lived under it as a Governor of Virginia, and it wasn’t hard. When we were making changes, we would submit them to the Justice Department. They had 90 days to review them. They would ask us questions. We would have dialogue. They would usually give us a green light. When they gave us a green light, we had some assurance that we were not doing anything intentionally—we were not doing anything that even unwittingly gets in people’s way in terms of being able to vote.

This bill would restore the preclearance requirement that the Supreme Court struck down in 2013 by requiring preclearance not of jurisdictions based on where they are—Southern States—but instead saying to any jurisdiction—North, South, East, West, Midwest—if you have had a pattern of voting rights violations in the past 25 years, you must seek preclearance, but as soon as you are clean, with no voting rights violations for 10 years, you

don’t have to seek preclearance unless you commit new voting rights violations. Even-steven. Every part of the country is treated the same.

The initial Voting Rights Act was completely bipartisan. Its reauthorization over years has been completely bipartisan. I stand on the floor to ask my colleagues, in the memory of my father-in-law, a Republican who was my political hero, who was a pro-voting rights person, as the Republican Party has been during much of its life, I ask my colleagues to join together and support vigorous participation of voters in this democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I come to the floor this afternoon to speak also about the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. This is S. 4.

Listening to my friend from Virginia here describe some of the history that he and his family have been through, again, this is an important part of the discussion and debate when we talk about one of the very cornerstones of our identity as an extraordinary nation, this principle of democracy and freedom and fair and open elections.

The majority leader filed cloture on the motion to proceed on Monday evening, and despite some very real reservations that I have—and it is fair to talk about those reservations—I will be among those who vote to begin debate on this measure when we have this vote in a few minutes here. I will do so because I strongly support and I believe that Congress should enact a bipartisan reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. We have done that. Congress has done that five times since 1965, typically—typically—by an overwhelming margin here in the Senate.

It has been about 15 years now since our last amendment to the Voting Rights Act, and I think it is fair to say that 15 years after passage, it is probably timely and necessary to look at updates.

In order to do that, I think that what we have to do is we have to step back from the partisanship. We have to step back from the politicization that is driving this conversation. I think we should be able to agree to meaningful improvements that will help ensure that all of our elections are free, they are fair, and they are accessible to all Americans.

Now, those who follow this issue know that it is probably no great surprise that I am involved in this discussion here today. I have been the lead Republican cosponsor of the voting rights reauthorization now for the last 6 years. I have worked with my friend from Vermont, Senator LEAHY, as well as with Senator DURBIN, Senator MANCHIN, and others to shape a framework that will allow us to make some progress on some very real and legitimate issues.

At this point, I feel that we have got a good foundation to help provide ac-

cess to the ballot that is equal, again, for all Americans and free from any form of discrimination. We should all be able to support legislation to assure just that much—that much—because nothing, as my friend from Virginia has said, is more fundamental than the right to vote.

We have all heard that story of Benjamin Franklin being asked at the end of the Constitutional Convention about the type of government that the Framers had designed. His response, at least according to some sources, was, “A republic if you can keep it.”

I recognize that one of the surest ways to lose our Republic is to allow the public trust in our elections to erode, and I fear that that is where we are—that that trust, that faith, in our own elections is eroding.

I have engaged in voting rights legislation because I want us to continue to reduce those barriers to Americans’ ability to voting, whether it is geographic, whether it is logistical—and we certainly know about that in Alaska—whether it is partisan or some other form. I think we recognize that we have come a long way from the 1960s—I would, certainly, hope so—but I think we need to acknowledge that we can continue to build on that through reasonable and well-considered legislation.

The voting rights legislation that I support is not this sweeping overhaul that would take power away from the States in order to federalize the election process. There was a bill earlier on the floor this year, and I voted against that. I didn’t like that very detailed, prescriptive approach that, I felt, was moving us toward a federalization.

Instead, the legislation that I support would provide greater transparency for Federal elections so that voters are fully informed, so that they know about the changes in voting procedures. It would protect voters from discrimination in all of its forms and continue to knock down the barriers that we know, in many places, still exist.

It would provide protections for voters, for election workers, and polling places to discourage the efforts to interfere, to intimidate, or to physically harm them.

It would provide for voting materials in relevant areas to be translated in our Native languages. This is very important for us back home in Alaska.

It would require States that have historically been found to discriminate against minority voters to, once again, preclear their changes in their voting laws, and it would uphold the many, many good practices and procedures that we have in States like Alaska, rather than burdening them with new mandates that aren’t designed for a place, again, like Alaska where, geographically, logistically, it just might simply not work.

That is the kind of legislation that I can support, but I need to be clear here. That is not the description of S.

4, the bill that is being brought up for debate. I don't support S. 4 as it was written and as it was introduced. What I can support in its place and as a starting point is the substitute amendment that the majority has agreed to lay down should the Senate agree to begin debate. That substitute amendment contains more than a dozen significant changes that my team and I have been working with others to negotiate.

So the question, I think, needs to be asked: Is that enough? And I say: No, it is not enough. Even with those changes, I still have concerns, and I know that many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle have concerns. Substantive changes will be needed before this measure is ready to pass the Senate.

So, if this procedural vote fails today, where do I think we go next? We have to go back. We have to consider this legislation through regular order, through the committee process.

In the meantime, I mentioned just the politicization, the partisanship that we have seen with these issues. I think: Let's stop the show votes. Let's give ourselves the space to work cooperatively across the aisle to reach the level of consensus that I think is important. It is important for this issue, and it is important for this country.

The goal here should be to avoid a partisan bill, not to take failing votes over and over for political gain. It really doesn't get us anywhere. It gets us on record. It allows you to weaponize, if you will, a critically important issue. It doesn't go anywhere. It doesn't serve anyone. It, ultimately, accomplishes nothing. Our only real option here is to figure out how we are working together on this. Our goal should be to match what we did in 2006 when the last reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act passed the Senate 98 to 0.

Wouldn't that be a goal for us all? Wouldn't that send a signal to people across this country—from Alaska to Maine—to have faith in our electoral process, in our elections?

Now, some may be wondering why, as a Republican, I am willing to put my name next to this legislation, pretty publicly, and acknowledge that it is not where I want the bill to be right now. But at this point, I think, if we can step back from the political exercise, I think we can do good. I think we need to do good. I believe that those of us who want to find common ground need to be part of the process. We need to be willing to get in, mix it up, and work it out, instead of sitting back on the sidelines and saying: I just don't like your product, and I am not going to offer anything else. I just don't like your product.

So let's get in the arena. Given my role as vice chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, I believe that I have an obligation to help resolve some of the longstanding issues that face our Native peoples in Alaska and around the country.

Finally, I believe it is simply dangerous to let voting rights become a wholly partisan issue, where our divisions just fester and take root in an area that is so central to our system of government.

So the vote in front of us today is procedural in nature on whether to open debate. It is not on final passage or anything close to it. There are even things in the substitute text that I, frankly, don't support and others that I have not been able to fully evaluate. But I also recognize that the framework within the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act is the most viable that we have, and it is the best starting point at which to legislate. So I will vote to begin this debate in the hopes that this is a step forward, not a step backward, as we are seeking a bipartisan accord.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators HOEVEN, MURRAY, MCCONNELL, and I be able to complete our remarks prior to the scheduled vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, Senator HOEVEN and I are here to speak in favor of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, but I did want to first thank Senator MURKOWSKI for her well-reasoned remarks and for her willingness to go forward with this debate. This is a debate about fundamental voting rights. We may not agree on everything, but she wants to have the debate, and that is all we are asking for.

We are asking to move forward with this very important piece of legislation. If there are things people don't like or things they like, we can discuss them, but this place has got to start working. We need to restore the Senate so we can debate the big issues of our time.

I truly appreciate Senator MURKOWSKI's willingness to do this today with her vote.

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL LEE CONNOR

Madam President, I come to the floor briefly today to support Michael Connor's nomination to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.

Senator HOEVEN and I are here together because we both care very much about getting this position filled. All of us have major, major projects in our States that need to be built, and he needs to get in this job. We are hopeful that we will have a vote on this tomorrow.

Michael brings to this position unparalleled experience in water management, and I am not just talking about his professional work but also his upbringing. He grew up on the edge of the desert in New Mexico, and he was raised with a heightened understanding of the importance of water practices. Over the course of his career, he has spent nearly two decades at the De-

partment of the Interior. During that time, he led efforts on water resource management. This experience will be vital as he takes on this new leadership role.

We all know about the importance of the Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works Program, from supporting navigation on our inland waterways and coastal ports to maintaining reservoirs that supply water to communities, to providing flood protection and risk management.

Senator HOEVEN and I are here together because we care a lot about flood protection. The Red River doesn't divide us between Minnesota and North Dakota; it unites us in our efforts to protect our communities. The Red River of the North has exceeded flood stage 55 times between 1902 and 2019, and the problem has worsened in recent years, with 7 of the top 10 floods occurring during the last 30 years. As we begin to see more and more severe impacts from extreme weather events, water management and resiliency will be increasingly important all over the country.

To build up sustainable water infrastructure that can manage flooding across all 50 States, we need leaders like Michael Connor overseeing the Army Corps. Time and again, he has proven himself to be a dedicated and capable leader.

Michael Walsh, a retired Army major general and former Corps of Engineers Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations, said in an interview that Michael Connor "has deep experience with water resource issues. He'll bring that experience to the Army."

I am proud to be supporting him. Again, we are very hopeful that we can have this vote tomorrow.

I want to thank Senator HOEVEN for the work that he has done in making sure we can clear the way for this vote on his side of the aisle.

Senator HOEVEN.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I thank the senior Senator from Minnesota for her hard work in getting Michael Connor to the floor. I have been very pleased to join with her, and, obviously, we are hopeful that, tomorrow, we will have that vote.

The position of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works is critical to every Member of this body. Every State has interactions with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Assistant Secretary is the top civilian who oversees the Corps of Engineers. The Assistant Secretary plays a vital role in formulating the Corps' budget, in setting policy and priorities for the Corps, and in ensuring that an incredible array of projects is managed and executed across the Nation.

For example, in my State of North Dakota, we have Corps projects in communities like Minot on flood protection. A number of years ago, we had 11,000 people and 4,000 homes and buildings inundated. Obviously, flood protection is incredibly vital for them,